



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Room 713, Los Angeles, California 90012  
(213) 974-1101  
<http://ceo.lacounty.gov>

SACHI A. HAMAI  
Chief Executive Officer

February 9, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sachi A. Hamai  
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors  
HILDA L. SOLIS  
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District

SHEILA KUEHL  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

## **UPDATE: SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT HIRING STRATEGY (ITEM 50-A, AGENDA OF APRIL 14, 2015; ITEM 10, AGENDA OF JUNE 22, 2015; AND ITEM 54, AGENDA OF SEPTEMBER 29, 2015)**

On September 29, 2015, the Chief Executive Office (CEO) was instructed, in conjunction with the Sheriff, to report back at the Mid-year Budget Adjustment meeting with funding and procedural recommendations for improving the hiring process for deputy sheriff trainees (DST), improving its retention practices, and identifying a clear target date for fully closing the vacancy gap.

### **SUMMARY**

The CEO and the Sheriff's Department (LASD), with assistance from the Department of Human Resources (DHR), have reviewed the DST hiring process to identify opportunities to maximize the use of existing training resources, solutions for bottlenecks, and quantify any additional resources that would be required to expedite the hiring of DSTs and their successful completion of the academy. No additional funding requests related to the hiring process are anticipated during this fiscal year.

The highlights of the review are as follows:

- The LASD recruitment campaign has significantly increased the number of DST applications. Local career fairs have also promoted security officer, security assistant, and custody assistant job opportunities which are feeder classifications into the DST ranks.
- A DHR analysis of each phase of the application process found the Sheriff's recent changes are relatively efficient. The CEO conducted a separate survey that found LASD's eight-month application timeframe is within the average of local law enforcement agencies.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

**Please Conserve Paper – This Document and Copies are Two-Sided  
Intra-County Correspondence Sent Electronically Only**

- The CEO and LASD reviewed several options to increase the academy's capacity to graduate more recruits; however, LASD has limited physical classroom and training space. Instead, LASD has established a goal of hiring 90 DSTs for each class and implemented strategies to reduce class attrition.
- The fiscal year (FY) 2015-16 budget included funding for more background investigators and support staff to screen applicants and added instructor and DST positions for the fourth academy track. LASD is absorbing approximately 44% of the staffing cost to operate the academy and is also utilizing existing resources to make improvements to its training facilities.

The LASD and CEO originally had estimated it would take five to six years to fill the existing 817 vacant budgeted Deputy positions. However, the improved process, increased the DST hiring target and recently implemented retention efforts will allow the LASD to fill all these positions and maintain a hiring rate comparable to attrition within three to four years.

## **FINDINGS**

### **DST RECRUITMENT**

The recruitment campaign initiated earlier this year has significantly increased the volume of DST applications, as shown below on Table 1. This reflects a 31% increase in applications received compared to the prior year. In addition to increasing the raw number of applications, the LASD is optimistic that the August 2015 rollout of its targeted social-media recruitment strategy will also increase the percentage of qualified applicants. An analysis of the recruitment campaigns will be conducted later this year.

TABLE 1: Applications Received

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
2014	1,481	1,159	1,243	1,037	1,016	1,069	1,497	2,405	1,333	1,110	1,144	796	15,290
2015	1,239	1,437	1,385	1,632	1,540	2,222	1,533	2,406	1,957	2,064	1,283	1,347	20,045

The LASD academy now operates eight classes annually and has recently increased their minimum hiring target from 80 to 90 DSTs per class equivalent to 720 DSTs annually. Based on LASD's experience, an estimated 4% of applicants will successfully meet all hiring standards and enter an academy class. Therefore, at least 1,500 applications must be received each month to meet the new minimum hiring target. During 2015, there was an average of 1,670 applications received each month.

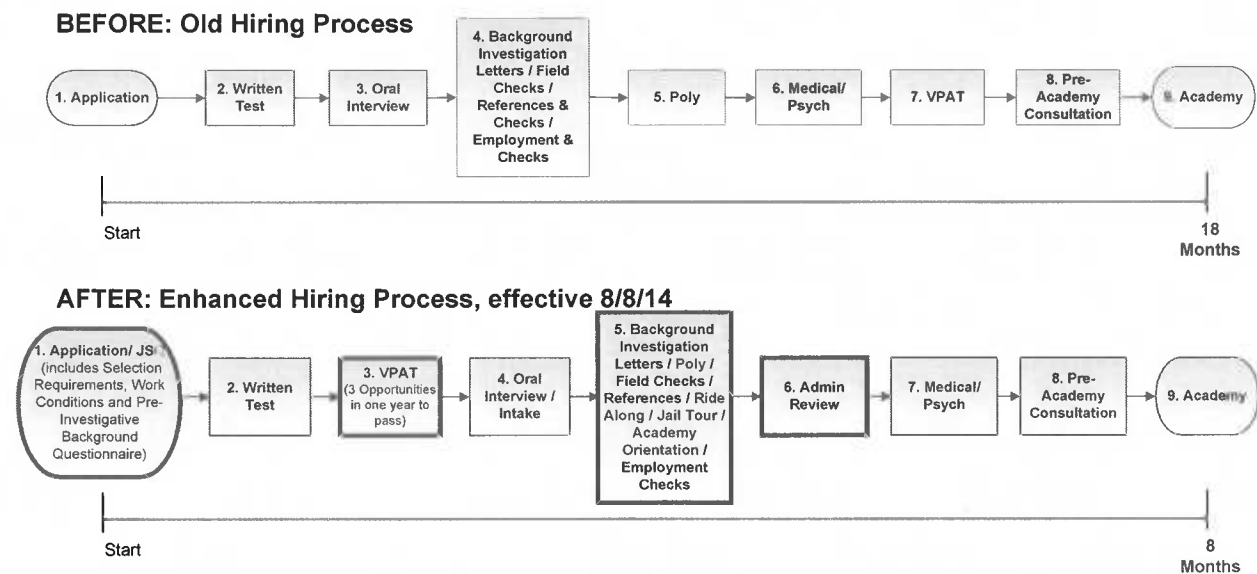
The LASD has also expanded its recruitment campaign to include promoting security officer, security assistant, and custody assistant positions at local career fairs. These classifications provide individuals with an opportunity to gain some law enforcement experience prior to

applying to become a DST. The department considers these classifications as natural feeders to the DST ranks.

## HIRING PROCESS

Consistent with the Board's interest in assisting the Sheriff with increasing the number of qualified candidates, DHR was requested to identify additional refinements that could further reduce the application period (see Attachment I). The DHR review commends the significant improvements made by the LASD to produce a more streamlined process, as reflected in the chart below:

### **Comparison of Deputy Sheriff Trainee Hiring Process**



The LASD's success in reducing the application-to-hire timeframe from 18 months to 8 months stems from changes that screened out unqualified applicants earlier in the hiring process which reduced workload. The hiring process includes the following enhancements:

Application Processing System (eHire): eHire is a paperless application processing program under development by LASD. eHire will create a fully electronic paperless application process that will improve document security, processing efficiency, and incorporate communication tools between LASD-applicant (status updates, notices, tips, etc.) and LASD with other agencies (background checks). The ongoing two-way communication with the applicant is among LASD's strategies to attract and build loyalty as other agencies compete for qualified applicants.

Job Specific Questionnaire (JSQ): The DST application now includes an automated JSQ which contains questions to determine the applicant's qualifications to meet the minimum requirements of a Deputy and the LASD's ethical standards. By making it the first step in the application process, candidates who do not meet basic qualifications are eliminated from the process early.

Validated Physical Ability Test (VPAT): Another example of a simple change producing significant efficiencies was moving the VPAT immediately after the written test. Previously, everyone who passed the written test automatically proceeded to the very resource intensive steps of oral interviews, background checks, polygraphs, medical and psychological exams. Given the volume of applicants, this led to backlogs throughout the process. Screening out applicants who do not meet the minimum physical conditioning requirements earlier has helped the LASD reduce the background investigations process to three months.

Further enhancements being developed include a pilot to have the VPAT and oral interview conducted on the same day instead of being separated by 2-3 weeks.

Job Preview Component: Running parallel to the background investigation period, the LASD added a patrol ride-along, a jail tour, and an academy orientation to provide applicants with a glimpse of their prospective career and a reality check to ensure they are mentally and emotionally prepared to enter law enforcement.

Administrative Review Panel: This panel of rotating LASD executives was instituted as a quality assurance measure to ensure that background investigations are thorough and free of bias. The Administrative Review Panel conducts a blind file review (in which all identifying information is redacted) of each applicant's qualifications (relative to the LASD's hiring standards) to mitigate any external influences on the hiring process.

#### *Survey of Law Enforcement Recruit Application Timeframes*

The CEO conducted a survey of local law enforcement agencies on the length of time required to process applications and hiring a new trainee. A number of factors differentiated the application processing timeframes between law enforcement agencies, including job posting frequency (a limited filing window versus open continuous), the number of applications accepted (set number versus open), and the depth of the background investigations. Overall, the LASD's eight-month application timeframe is comparable to other local agencies, as reflected in Table 2:

TABLE 2: Survey of Law Enforcement Recruit Processing Timeframes (as of July 2015)

Agency	Average Number of Applicants	Background Check	Overall Time From Application to Hire
<b>SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNTIES</b>			
Los Angeles	10,988 (Jan-July 2015)	3 months	8 months
Orange	Not available	3 - 6 months	6 - 11 months
Riverside	Not available	Not available	4 - 6 months
San Bernardino	Not available	3 - 4 months	4 - 6 months
San Diego	3,391 (2014)	4 - 6 months	4 - 6 months
Ventura	1,554 (Mar-Jun 2015)	2 - 3 months	8 months
Average timeframe:		3 - 4 months	5 - 8 months
<b>LARGE LOCAL CITIES</b>			
Los Angeles	20,144	3 months	8 months
Long Beach	Not available	1 month	7 - 9 months
Glendale	2,000	3 - 4 months	5 - 7 months
Pasadena	250 - 350	4 - 6 months	4 - 6 months
Santa Monica	Not available	2 - 3 months	6 - 9 months
Irvine	1,000	1 - 1.5 months	6 months
Anaheim	1,200	4 - 9 months	5 - 10 months
Average timeframe:		3 - 4 months	6 - 8 months
Combined Average timeframe:		3 - 4 months	6 - 8 months

### ACADEMY CAPACITY

The LASD academy currently operates four tracks, each graduating two classes annually, with a 22-week curriculum comprised of basic law enforcement training and specialized instruction in weapons, use of force, and emergency vehicle operations. The curriculum is cumulative with early courses serving as the foundation for the more advanced learning domains. The eight academy classes are staggered approximately six weeks apart throughout the year. Capacity for each academy class is 100 recruits.

The LASD and CEO assessed the feasibility of several strategies to increase the academy's training capacity, including the addition of a fifth academy track or increasing the number of DSTs to 115 per class. However, these options are precluded because of limited physical classroom and training space. Both options also further complicate course scheduling, which may affect a DST's ability to successfully complete the 22-week curriculum. For example, the emergency vehicle operations center (EVOC) requires each class to be divided into smaller squads with a staggered schedule to accommodate recruit-instructor ratios and space limitations. Therefore, while one squad receives EVOC training, the remaining squads are rotating through other training regimes before they all regroup as a class. It is important that squad schedules are coordinated among the various training facilities because of the cumulative

format of the curriculum. Adding another track or increasing the class size severely limits the academy's scheduling flexibility within the 22-week period considering four classes may be in session at a given time. Therefore, a scheduling delay in one squad will not only affect that class, but also poses potential cascading delays to three other classes. The aforementioned options would also require hiring more DSTs and instructors, the cost of which is elaborated in the budget discussion of this report.

The LASD will instead be working within the current 100 classroom seat limit. The LASD will increase the number of DSTs from 80 to 90 while limiting the number of recruits from participating agencies (PA) to 10. Table 3 reflects the number of DST's starting in each academy class, currently enrolled, and recently graduated.

TABLE 3: Deputy Sheriff Trainee Academy Class

	Class Number	Start Date	Graduation Date	No. DST Hired (Class Start Size)	No. DST Graduated	Retention Rate
Three Academy Tracks (FY 2014-15)	403	08/25/14	01/23/15	80	68	85%
	404*	10/06/14	03/06/15	64	50	78%
	405	12/08/14	05/08/15	79	56	71%
	406	02/16/15	07/17/15	70	51	73%
	407	04/06/15	09/04/15	70	50	71%
	408	06/22/15	11/20/15	81	66	81%
Total				444	341	77%

					Current Class Size (as of 1/10/16)	
Four Academy Tracks (FY 2015-16)	409	08/17/15	01/15/16	87	69	79%
	410	09/21/15	02/19/16	85	68	80%
	411	11/02/15	04/01/16	90	80	89%
	412	12/07/15	05/06/16	90	83	92%
	413	02/01/16	07/01/16	90*		
	414	03/14/16	08/12/16	90*		
	415	04/25/16	09/23/16	90*		
	416	06/05/16	11/04/16	90*		
Total				352	300	85%

\* Projected starting class size.

### DST Preparation and Retention

During FY 2014-15, the academy operated a total of six classes and had an average starting class size of 74 DSTs, producing 57 graduates for an annual total of 341 new deputies and an average retention rate of 77%. Factors contributing to DST separation include:

- 45% Academic readiness
- 15% Physical conditioning
- 10% Injury
- 9% Loss of interest (recruit no longer sought a law enforcement career)
- 9% Personal reasons (typically lack of a family support system)
- 4% Mentally unprepared
- 4% Ethics/integrity
- 3% Medical condition identified during training
- 1% Shooting range

The LASD has established a goal of increasing retention to 80% for the eight classes scheduled for this fiscal year; therefore, the larger starting class of 90 DSTs would produce at least 72 graduates for an annual total of 576 new deputies. In order to meet this goal and reduce attrition, several retention measures have recently been instituted to improve DST's success, including:

#### Pre-academy Preparation

- The job preview (jail tour and patrol ride-along) during the background investigation period provides applicants with a reality check of the daily work conditions faced by law enforcement.
- A pre-academy orientation by a Recruit Training Officer (RTO) followed by a question and answer forum led by two current recruits who discuss academy expectations in leadership, academics, and physical conditioning.
- A pre-academy orientation guidebook has been developed to include academic study aides, physical training standards, financial planning (purchase of uniforms, physical training gear, etc.), and other academy support related actions.
- A pre-academy online orientation is being developed with College of the Canyons. The goal is to provide preparatory materials through an online portal and ensure a consistent experience by every applicant. This system will include videos, documents, as well as interactive elements to ensure candidate understanding of materials.
- LASD has established an onsite pre-academy physical training and coaching program led by current RTO's with the goal of physically preparing candidates for the rigors of the academy. RTO's explain the VPAT is merely the minimum physical ability threshold and passing it does not mean they are prepared for the academy's rigorous physical training requirements. RTO's also answer other academy questions and provide applicants with tips to successfully prepare for the academy.

#### Academy Support Services

- Recruits receive 16 hours of training in the areas of stress management, resiliency building, and adversity tolerance. The LASD is currently evaluating additional successful evidence-based resiliency programs used by academic, military, and sports performance disciplines.
- The LASD views physical training as an essential law enforcement requirement to ensure personal safety, long-term wellness, and reduce attrition. The academy continually monitors and evaluates the physical training program to ensure it remains current with any advances in industry standards. These efforts include working with State-wide subject matter experts, collaboration with first responder trainers in the region, and partnerships with academic researchers. LASD is also exploring the sports medicine and injury prevention models used by other first responders and military training programs.
- The academy's track and field will be renovated to improve safety and the span of physical training exercises that can be performed. The renovations include the level grading of the track and field, installation of a rubberized track, and an updated obstacle course.

#### FISCAL YEAR 2015-16 BUDGET

The FY 2015-16 budget included additional staff for the Personnel Unit and Training Bureau. The Personnel Unit was allocated an additional 12 background investigators (Deputy Sheriff), a Sergeant, and four clerical staff. The additional staff will improve the processing time for applications and reduce the backlog and turnaround time for background investigations.

The Training Bureau (academy) added a fourth academy track comprised of 7 instructors (Deputy Sheriff, Bonus I), a Sergeant, and 70 DSTs. The current annual staffing cost to operate the four academy tracks is approximately \$51.4 million with a total of 70 POST-certified instructors (Deputy, Bonus I), 9 Sergeants, and 360 DST positions (see Attachment II). The LASD is budgeted with \$28.8 million to operate two academy tracks and the specialized training units. The \$22.6 million staffing cost for the remaining two academy tracks is absorbed by the department, including the cost to increase each class to 90 DSTs and the basic training instructors for two academy tracks.

The LASD has traditionally provided no-cost training to PA recruits on the basis of maintaining a regional training standard which benefits mutual aid response situations. If a class size approaches 100 recruits, PA's are often asked to supplement the academy staff by providing basic training instructors.

LASD is also utilizing existing resources to make improvements to its training facilities, specifically the renovation of the track and field.



### Cost to Increase Academy Class Size

The LASD and CEO assessed the feasibility of adding a fifth academy track or increasing the number of DSTs to 115. As previously discussed, these options are precluded by limited space (significant renovations to classrooms and training facilities would be required) and scheduling concerns that potentially could affect a DST's success in completing the curriculum. The respective staffing budget for both of these options is reflected in Table 4. In addition, LASD would need to conduct a review of each facility to determine the estimated cost to expand classrooms, training facilities, locker rooms, etc.

TABLE 4: Cost Estimate for Academy Expansion

	OPTION I	OPTION II
Increase Class Size to:	5th Academy track	115
Additional Deputy Sheriff Trainee Positions	90	100
Sergeants	1	1
Basic Training Instructors	8	8
EVOC Instructors*	3	3
Weapons Instructors*	4	4
Force Instructors*	3	3
Total Additional Instructors (Deputy Sheriff, Bonus I)	18	18
Deputy Sheriff Trainee	\$ 9,332,000	\$ 10,369,000
Sergeant	\$ 205,000	\$ 205,000
Deputy Sheriff, Bonus I	\$ 3,132,000	\$ 3,780,000
Total Expansion Cost	\$ 12,669,000	\$ 13,706,000

\* Specialized training instructors are required to maintain the DST-instructor ratio.

### STAFFING PROJECTION

The June 22, 2015 report, Sheriff's Department Hiring Strategy: Recruitment Campaign and Preliminary Hiring Capacity Assessment, projected five to six years to fill existing vacancies and maintain a hiring rate comparable to attrition. This projection was based on a class size of 80 DSTs. As reflected in Table 5, the cumulative impact of increasing the class size to 90 DSTs reduces the time to fill existing vacancies to three to four years.

TABLE 5: Hiring Plan Projection

	FY 15-16 (as of 7/5/15)	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19
Deputy Sheriff	1,261			
Frozen positions (salary savings)	(444)			
<b>TOTAL DEPUTY VACANCIES</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>382</b>
Sergeant and above vacant positions	261			
Annual attrition	342	342	342	342
Projected new staffing needs	0	TBD	TBD	TBD
<b>TOTAL SWORN VACANCIES</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>1,192</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>724</b>
Deputy Sheriff Trainee (90 DST/class)	712	720	720	720
DST attrition (20%)	(142)	(144)	(144)	(144)
<b>TOTAL ACADEMY GRADUATES</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>576</b>
<b>YEAR-END VACANT SWORN POSITIONS</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>148</b>

The Sheriff is hesitant to provide a definitive target date because multiple variables affect his ability to fill these existing vacancies. The efforts to improve the hiring process, as outlined in this and prior reports, address known variables such as recruitment marketing, applicant processing and qualification, and academy training. However, the LASD's ability to fill these 817 vacant positions is also subject to any subsequent new vacant positions that may be created to address emergent public safety concerns requiring new specialized units or staffing changes for contract services to the cities, college district, transit, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The Sheriff has initiated innovative practices to attract and train a new generation of diverse and community-minded law enforcement officers, overhauled the application/screening process, and implemented programs to increase academy preparedness and subsequent graduation rates.

The LASD will continue to make periodic reports to the Board with its progress in reducing the number of deputy vacancies in the LASD. No additional funding requests related to the hiring process or academy is being requested.

Each Supervisor  
February 9, 2016  
Page 11

If you have any questions, please contact David Turla at (323) 526-5363 or at [dturla@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:dturla@ceo.lacounty.gov).

SAH:JJ:SW  
DA:DT:cg

#### Attachments

c:     Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
       County Counsel  
       Sheriff

Q:\Board Memos\02.09.16 Sheriff's Department Hiring Strategy Report Back.Docx

## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW OF SHERIFF'S HIRING PROCESS

The following summarizes key topics covered during several in-depth meetings between the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Sheriff's Department (LASD), and the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to identify opportunities to enhance the deputy sheriff hiring process:

### Validated Physical Agility Testing: Pre-Application Certification

DHR and LASD discussed the feasibility of making VPAT a component of the deputy sheriff trainee classification's minimum requirements and require candidates to submit a physical agility test certification as part of their application. The objective of this process change is to ensure prospective candidates meet the minimum physical standards at the time of application and eliminate the staff and time intensive VPAT testing conducted by the LASD. DHR noted this would mirror changes made during the recent administration of the firefighter trainee exam which had a very high volume of applicants.

Unfortunately, this option is precluded by industry differences in the way the physical agility tests are administered for law enforcement versus firefighters. Specifically, fire departments share an industry standardized test that is administered by various outside vendors. In addition, fire departments enjoy a very large pool of candidates who are willing to pay an average \$150 to take the physical agility test. In contrast, there is no local law enforcement industry standard and each agency administers their unique physical agility test. Given the competition among law enforcement agencies to attract qualified candidates, it would be disadvantageous for the LASD to require applicants to pay for their physical agility test when other agencies are also recruiting them at no cost to the applicant. It would also be counterproductive for the LASD to conduct pre-application VPAT testing for all potential applicants since more resources would be required to administer than the current process.

### Background Investigations: Outside Vendors

DHR raised the possibility of using outside vendors to perform the LASD's background investigations. The LASD now uses Deputies and 120-Day retirees (former Deputies) to conduct background investigations for both sworn and civilian applicants. The LASD has articulated that maintaining an internal background investigations process for personnel is integral to their recruitment objectives of preserving LASD accountability, establishing a connection with the candidates, and performing ongoing assessments of the applicant. However, the LASD is open to hiring civilian background investigators to perform the civilian applicant background checks, thereby freeing Deputy and Retiree background investigators to focus on the background check for sworn applicants.

### Background Investigations: Job Preview Component

DHR raised concerns that the job preview component lengthened the background investigation period. The job preview includes the patrol ride along, jail tour, and academy orientation. The LASD explained these components do not add time to the background investigation process since it runs parallel and is completed by other units. The job preview is intentionally timed late in the hiring process to ensure a nexus between the final hiring stages and the academy.

Medical/Physical Exam: Height and Weight Requirements

The deputy sheriff trainee classification has clearly defined height and weight requirements. Although candidates must successfully pass the VPAT early in the application process, the LASD does not screen to determine whether candidates meet the height and weight requirements until the final stage of the application process: the medical/physical examination. It is unclear what proportion of the candidates fall out of the application process at this point. They are likely within the population who fail to schedule their medical/physical exam appointment within the set period after clearing the background investigation process.

DHR proposed performing a height and weight screening earlier in the process, such as at the time of the written exam, to alleviate the workload on the remaining components of the process, in particular the background investigations. The LASD indicated the medical examination at the end of the hiring process is the official confirmation of whether or not a candidate meets the height and weight requirements. This medical exam cannot be conducted until a conditional job offer is made. In addition, the LASD places a premium on identifying candidates who meet their high ethical standards and believes the weight requirements can be met through the recently initiated voluntary pre-academy physical training program offered to candidates during the application process.

ATTACHMENT II

**FY 2015-16 ACADEMY STAFFING BUDGET: 360 Deputy Sheriff Trainee (Recruit) Positions (90 per class)**

	Academy Basic Training				Emergency Vehicle Operations Center	Weapons Training	Force Training	TOTAL
	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4				
On-site Recruit Capacity	100	100	100	100	18	100	100	400
Recruit:Instructor Ratio*	13	13	13	13	1.5	5	6	
No. Recruits	70	90	15					175
No. Instructors (Bonus I)	7	8			12	16	10	53
No. Supervisors (Sgt)	1	1			1	2	2	7
Funded Recruits	\$7,258,000	\$9,332,000	\$1,555,000					\$18,145,000
Funded Bonus I	\$1,218,000	\$1,392,000			\$2,088,000	\$2,785,000	\$1,740,000	\$9,223,000
Funded Sgt	\$205,000	\$205,000			\$205,000	\$410,000	\$410,000	\$1,435,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$8,681,000</b>	<b>\$10,929,000</b>	<b>\$1,555,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$2,293,000</b>	<b>\$3,195,000</b>	<b>\$2,150,000</b>	<b>\$28,803,000</b>
No. Recruits**	20		75	90				185
No. Instructors (Bonus I)	1		8	8				17
No. Supervisors (Sgt)			1	1				2
Unfunded Recruits	\$2,074,000		\$7,776,000	\$9,332,000				\$19,182,000
Unfunded Bonus I	\$174,000		\$1,392,000	\$1,392,000				\$2,958,000
Unfunded Sgt			\$205,000	\$205,000				\$410,000
<b>Total Unfunded Cost</b>	<b>\$2,248,000</b>		<b>\$9,373,000</b>	<b>\$10,929,000</b>				<b>\$22,550,000</b>
Total Existing Cost	\$10,929,000	\$10,929,000	\$10,928,000	\$10,929,000	\$2,293,000	\$3,195,000	\$2,150,000	\$51,354,000

\* The recruit-instructor ratio for specialized training includes basic training instructors who have specialized training certifications.